(c) whether Government propose to reduce the issue prices for BPL; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHANTA KUMAR): (a) No such decision has been taken by the Government.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No such proposal is under consideration at present.

(d) Does not arise.

Obsolescent Defence Equipment

*452. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of defence equipment which have been declared as obsolescent by the DGQA/ANSP during the last three years; and

(b) the status and value of holding of the stocks of the spares associated with the equipment declared obsolescent during the above period?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Equipment is declared obsolescent in accordance with a set procedure. In general, the equipment will be classified obsolescent in accordance with a laid down 'discard policy' for that particular equipment. In the last three years, 72 defence equipments have been declared obsolescent.

(b) The data sought is not commensurate with the result intended to be achieved.

Disposal of sugar stocks

*453. SHRI H. K. JAVARE GOWDA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of heavy sugar stock approximately worth Rs. 1800 crores lying in the Karnataka godowns;

(b) if so, whether Government of Karnataka has requested for assistance in disposal of sugar stocks; and

(c) if so, the steps taken by Government to facilitate clearance of the sugar stocks?

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THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHANTA KUMAR): (a) The Government is aware of the high level of sugar stocks held by sugar factories in the country including the factories located in the State of Karnataka.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) In order to reduce sugar stocks, the Government is, *inter alia*, encouraging the export of sugar. The following measures have been taken in this regard:

(i) Levy Exemption has been given on the quantity of sugar exported.

(ii) The quantity of sugar exported is treated as advance freesale release and is adjusted after a period of 12 months from the date of release.

(iii) Duty Entitlement Pass Book (DEPB) @5% value of f.o.b. price of sugar has been allowed.

(iv) Quantitative ceiling on the export of sugar has been removed.

(v) Requirement of Registration-cum-Allocation Certificate from the Agricultural & Processed Food Export Development Authority (APEDA) has been dispensed with effect from 1.4.2001.

(vi) State Governments of the major sugar producing States have been requested to give remission in purchase tax on sugarcane on the quantity of sugar exported.

The sugar factories have been provided temporary relief by way of permitting them to sell equivalent quantity of unlifted levy sugar stocks as freesale sugar in the open market. During the current sugar season, out of 1,25,955.6 MTs. of unlifted levy sugar stocks so far permitted to be sold as freesale sugar, the share of the sugar factories in Karnataka works out to 48,803.6 MTs.

Advance releases of freesale sugar have been made, subject to adjustment and 5% levy obligations, to needy sugar mills to enable them to clear cane price dues of the farmers and to reduce their stocks.

Regional Imbalances in I.T. Sector

*454. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in the field of information technology, Northern States are far behind the Southern States;